

# THE *Final Straw*

A WEEKLY ANARCHIST SHOW

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# continuing struggle against the mountain valley pipeline

**The Final Straw Radio**  
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**C:** I think it's great, I appreciate you for willing to talk with us and help us get this fight out. Because it's gonna take a lot. To give some people even some rest... We've done great, but I'm telling you, folks, I fear for what is coming. I know, the summer is going to be long. And they're working today, they're working on a Saturday. This is going to be gung ho, they're going to be gung ho talking bullshit, because they know, there's nothing that can be done.

It makes me feel like the action with the helicopter. To tell you one of my favorite actions was the helicopter. They were seeding these hills, which the grass still hasn't grown, because they threw seeds down on black tarp and I have pictures of that also. People were messaging me... They flew this helicopter for weeks, and in some places, two helicopters. I have pictures of them loading side by side. It's constant noise. It's draining on people, people are having to give their dogs anxiety pills now. That's crazy. That day that someone had locked down to the helicopter, I remember feeling so good. Yeah, fuck their helicopter – not today. And that's the feeling I want to go into this summer, just some of that empowerment. You're driving us insane and we're going to do the same for you today. Just getting in their way.

**TFSR: I got a big smile, just hearing you say that. That's great. Fuck your helicopter and we're going to be in your way.**

**C:** Just being able to get on the security's nerves, because they act all big and bad. I remember just telling the security: "So you just let someone run by you and lock down to a helicopter? What kind of job are you doing?", just ragging on him for letting somebody lock down to a helicopter. It was also a lot of bullshit and they were fined, a good amount of money, and that helicopter was back up the next day. There was nothing wrong with the helicopter, I got pictures of it. That day, they also chose to try to have a drone war with somebody on our side who had a drone up. There's a video of that on Appalachians Against Pipelines. I don't know if it was MVP or if it was the state police but they were definitely going after the drone that was up in the air, making sure that the person on the helicopter was okay. So it was an eventful day. It was probably one of my most memorable actions.

A conversation with Rose and Crystal, two comrades involved in the struggle against the Mountain Valley Pipeline, a 304 mile, 41 inch in diameter liquified so-called natural gas pipeline with a possible 75 mile extension crossing many delicate waterways, slopes and communities across Virginia, West Virginia and North Carolina.

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**Crystal:** I am Crystal (she, her). I live on stolen Monacan and Tutelo land, Eastern Montgomery county where the Mountain Valley Pipeline is crossing through.

**Rose:** I'm Rose (she, her). I live in so-called West Virginia, on stolen Monacan land. I am not originally from here or Appalachia. I've been in the fight against the Mountain Valley Pipeline for over five years now and have been involved in other fights against extraction, like fracking. Crystal, do you want to add a little bit about your involvement before we get started?

**C:** It's been about five years now. I just started monitoring it when I noticed the cut coming through near the river here. I do jail solidarity work. And we had a Prisoner Speak-out, and one of the people that came to that event was from Blacksburg and got to talk. They let me know what that cut was, and they had actually been riding the route for quite some time taking pictures. I got to go with them, and that's how it started for me. I was just riding around with someone I met at a Prisoner Speak-out.

**TFSR:** So what is the Mountain Valley Pipeline? What companies are trying to build it or planning to operate it? What's it supposed to carry through? Where and for what market? Just all the big who, what, where, when things.

**R:** I can start maybe with what the Mountain Valley Pipeline is. Do you want to jump in, Crystal, with some of the companies behind it?

**C:** Sure.

**R:** The Mountain Valley Pipeline is a 42-inch diameter, 300-mile long pipeline. Just to note, 42 inches is huge. For anybody who's trying to envision this, you can get in this pipe and crawl around in it, it's so big. The pipeline is slated to begin in so-called northern West Virginia, it runs into so-called Central Virginia. And there's a possible extension into so-called North Carolina – called the South Gate Extension. We're going to largely be talking about the main line, not the South Gate Extension. It's because they're in very different phases at this point. This pipeline is going to carry pressurized fracked natural gas through it, which will ultimately expand fracking in the whole region – in northern West Virginia.

**C:** Some of the major investors and stakeholders in this NextEra Energy, Consolidated Edison, also known as ConEd, Atlas Gas Ltd, and Roanoke Gas Company – which is a local gas company here that owns about 1% of this, which made it qualify for the eminent domain court. They have built a gate station here in Elliston in the part of EastMont. They since have raised the cost to their customers to cover their ass in this terrible investment.

It only hurts the working and poor folks already struggling in Roanoke with recent high rent costs and ongoing gentrification in Northwest Roanoke, which is a predominantly black and under-resourced community, also a food desert. For these people in it, this is their drinking water also. That water is not even

look at some good banks. Wells Fargo seems to be the main choice, I think it's the top investor in this project. Is that correct?

**R:** I don't think they're the top investor, but I think they weigh in heavily, for sure. Definitely doing solidarity actions wherever you can in your own communities, just spreading the word about what's happening here feels really important right now.

**C:** We did have some banner drops a couple of weeks ago, when we knew this was going through, right after the Debt Ceiling was signed, at Richmond, North Carolina, Virginia. The hashtag was #SaveAppalachia and #StopMVP. So folks, if you want to get creative and drop a banner somewhere, that'd be awesome. And share those pictures, so we can see them.

**R:** We're also on social media, Appalachians Against Pipelines. It's on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter.

**TFSR:** I'd love to hear more about this... This struggle is local to the area where the pipeline is being constructed, and the implications of it are global, but so is the network of corporations that are involved in the construction of this, the government agencies and individual politicians that are pushing this through. Also localized struggles like this are going on in all sorts of places that have these inter-meshing. Some of the same corporations that are involved in this are probably involved in pushing for the construction of Cop City, just south of so-called Atlanta. I wonder if you could talk about the place that the struggle against the Mountain Valley Pipeline sits in relation to other struggles against ecocide?

**C:** The Stop Cop City... I feel horrible for what's going on down there, with Tortugueta and their mom, listening to her speak earlier on their last day of action down there – that's just a horrible situation. I hope that's nothing that we will have to face here, but that definitely has my heart hurting and I'm also nervous. I hate to be Debbie downer, but what's happening down there with the youth... They killed them, that young person, and that's nothing I hope ever happens again, ever.

I don't know. I'm sorry.

**R:** Just thinking about indigenous-led resistance everywhere to similar projects like this. We think about Coastal Gaslink Pipeline that is trying to be forced through Wetsuwet'en land. It's really important to be engaged and struggle against all projects like this, but, again, if you can't travel – doing something in your own communities is important. Not just pipelines or so-called environmental work. Fighting against the prisons and the expansion of the police or rather the existence of the police and all of the things is really important.

**TFSR:** Crystal, Rose, unless you wanted to say anything else, I really appreciate you having this conversation and the work that you're doing and taking the time to be in touch with me and answer these questions.



willing to offer? – This pipeline, that’s gonna just make everything worse.

**C:** Yeah, I’ll add that it’s also adding 90 million new cars a year. Also recently, this is within the last two days, James Martin, the PhD chief of Gas Branch, three division of Gas, Environment and Engineering, wrote in a letter that Mountain Valley has estimated that over the operational life of the project up to 247.68 acres of trees associated with potential future slips (that’s what they call landslides) may need to be cleared.

Additionally, there are potentially impacts from future vegetation maintenance during operation. Because of these factors, Mountain Valley has determined that the project is likely to adversely affect the tricolored bat. FERC agrees with the analysis and conclusion of the biological assessment. So that’s another thing with the endangered species, they did say “No, they won’t be affected”, but now that they’ve gotten all their permits, its just like the over 600 waterways, now they’re saying “Oh, yeah, we’ll probably gonna have to deforest another 300 acres. Oh, and that bat? Yeah, that’s probably gonna get fucked too”. It’s bullshit, it’s all coming to light now, things that we already knew. Now, they’re just saying it. I’m just gonna add that we really don’t know what the future outcome, of how much more damage it’s going to be, because it’s ongoing. We can’t really say, “We know it’s gonna be a lot, but probably more than what we think.”

**R:** Yes, for sure. As we see this project as a continuation of colonization, and we are, again, not just fighting for this pipeline, but for getting land back to indigenous people, it does feel important to note that the South Gate Extension of this pipeline is slated to go through Lumbee territory, and there’s been a lot of indigenous resistance to that section in particular. I just want to plug that piece as well, because it’s important.

**TFSR: How can people that are interested in learning more and maybe getting involved in the resistance to the resumption of the Mountain Valley Pipeline construction, get involved and learn more? What sort of work is needed either locally or remotely?**

**R:** Construction on this pipeline, since the Debt Ceiling Deal – it has started. The landscape suddenly looks very different, they are moving equipment, there are workers around everywhere. It’s happening, it’s very overwhelming, it’s very scary. We are definitely calling for people in this moment to come help us fight this pipeline on the ground, stop them with these waterways, stop them in the National Forest, stop them from coming through these mountains. So one way you can do that is to get in touch with us at [appalachiansagainstpipelines@protonmail.com](mailto:appalachiansagainstpipelines@protonmail.com). If folks can’t make it – do solidarity actions where you are.

Crystal, do you have ways folks can see the list of investors? Is that posted somewhere easily accessible?

**C:** I know Third Act, which is a group of 60+ elders who have been giving the banks hell, getting arrested in the banks sitting in, they’re probably a good place to

taken from the Roanoke River right now, the river that this project will bore under. It’s because of “forever chemicals” were found a couple of months ago. So it’s just all madness to add this pipeline in. There’s already enough bullshit happening, and recently after they got the stamp of approval from Biden, they have said that now they’re only going to run this at 35% capacity. The whole idea was how we need this so bad for national energy security. Now, after they get everything that they want, they come out and they are saying, they’re only going to maybe run it at 35%. So how bad is it really needed to tear up everything for 35%?

**R:** Yeah, and just to be totally clear, we know that projects like this don’t meet a need for natural gas and fossil fuels, they actually create the demand. That’s an important thing that Crystal is getting at. And when we’re just talking about this 300-mile long route, which is quite extensive, we’re also talking about fracking, which – for folks who aren’t familiar with that process – is an incredibly toxic extractive process, where really toxic chemicals are pumped into the ground to crack shale that releases natural gas. We don’t know what’s in those chemicals. There’s all kinds of reports of people getting really sick in the frack fields, water being poisoned, air quality being terrible. So we’re not only talking about this pipeline, we’re talking about expanding fossil fuel extraction in general, and just sort of being pushed further into Climate Chaos.

**C:** If I can add on to that... On the 1st of October, I got to go to the Gulf Coast and met with the Port Arthur [Community Action Network]. John Beard is the person with that, but also Rise, St. James with Sharon Lavigne in Louisiana. I got to see all the new export facilities being built there. And these folks are already burdened. They’re waking up at 6:30 in the morning with a headache. I was using my inhaler, because of the air quality. We’re crying now about the smoke that’s hitting us here and how bad it is, and these people live this every day, and they’re actively constructing 10 export facilities, which wasn’t even a thing until 2015. Obama lifted that – from what I learned down there. So it’s just contributing to Cancer Alley.

**TFSR: Sounds like the EPA just pulled back from a lawsuit concerning the impacts of a civil rights claim around Cancer Alley about cancer levels among residents there. Between the fires and what you’re talking about – the actual flow of gas and export of these things, and also the water pollution, it really shows the fundamentally global level of the impacts of these things.**

**Would you mind saying a few things about the terminology of natural gas, because that’s how it’s marketed and that’s how it’s talked about. We can talk about it – LNG, or liquefied natural gas. But there’s a weird framing to that term, as the industry has gotten that phrase to be normalized.**

**R:** It’s a really good point that natural gas sounds like maybe something that’s a little bit cleaner and greener. That is what they’ve tried to market since the fracking boom. Just to be clear, things have really changed in the last 10 or 20 years, when it comes to fracking. There’s new technology that makes it more dangerous than

it's ever been, especially with the horizontal drilling that happens in the fracking process. There was this discovery that maybe the extraction industry could access more natural gas than they could before with the development of new technology, like horizontal drilling and the slew of toxic chemicals that are protected by trade secrets, so we don't actually know what's in that toxic mix.

There's always been this idea since that fracking boom, that natural gas could be a bridge fuel for us, as we're "moving away from coal". I say, quote – unquote, because they are still expanding coal and mountaintop removal mining for coal, in Appalachia, in West Virginia, I'm sure in other places, too. There's this imagined idea that natural gas is going to be a safe way to help us move away from fossil fuels. And I think the marketing of calling it natural helps frame that imaginary idea. You mentioned the fires, Crystal is talking about what's happening in the Gulf, it's clear that there's not actually time for us to be really invested in some bridge fuel with a rate of climate change. Crystal, do you want to jump in on any of that?

**C:** No, because I think you know much more about that. I've just entered this fight, not as an environmentalist, but it was just something that was happening basically in my backyard.

I've learned a whole lot since this. Like the fact that they recycled the frack gas by putting it down on the roads before it snows, which just makes me cringe. I think about all the deer and the wildlife that you see on the side of the road, licking that after a snowfall. Those are things I never knew, or that we just don't know. They call it a brine. And it's really recycled fracked wastewater, and it's pretty disgusting. We have tributaries, we're at the bottom of mountains, so we have water everywhere, there's so many unnamed waters. This stuff just runs. This recycled frack gas blasting wastewater is being pawned off on unsuspecting people like me, who just think: "Oh, that's great, they're gonna keep the roads clear when it snows". Really I would just rather not, if that's what we're going to use. So that's my rant about the fracked gas industry.

**R:** Yeah, the waste that comes from the fracking process – it's a really important point – because a certain amount of the chemicals are sucked back up after, and a lot of them end up in injection wells, which are exactly what they sound like – just wells of frack waste in the ground, or like Crystal said, this stuff ends up on the side of the road. We're talking about a product that people are calling natural gas, meanwhile it's generating radioactive waste. It's a really good point that they've really tried to market this in a way that makes it sound like it's so much better. It technically does burn cleaner than coal, that's how they've been able to do that. I think the campaign has certainly been launched against coal and the amount of coal that's burning is on the decline, but natural gas just isn't a solution.

**TFSR:** I'm assuming that in the competition between different methods of creating electricity for consumers, or industry, the motivations are not just based on pure science, or on what's going to cause the least amount of damage to whatever environments they're passing through (they're pulled

lower magnitude earthquakes, but there's still 2.5-2.8. That's still sketchy. One just recently.

**TFSR:** I was driving through the area that you are talking about 6-7 months ago, and noted a lot of pipeline sitting stacked up in fields without tarps on it or anything like that. In the meantime, while this projects been on hold, was that MVP stuff that was just sitting in waiting? Is that a concern in terms of the safety of delivery? While this has been on pause, how have the pieces of pipe and the fittings and all these things been being stored? Is that a thing you can speak to? And is that a concern?

**C:** I can say it's a huge concern. Just a couple of days ago, Mountain Valley Pipeline responded to that concerns with a letter to FERC, and it was 382 pages. I have not read it yet. They can't make it simple. It was 382 pages going over their response to our concerns – it is chipping, there are raccoon living in this pipeline, the epoxy coating is peeling off of it. We've all taken pictures of that. These pipes were supposed to have been rotated – that's a big lie – it has not happened. So that is a real concern. And apparently, there's not much that PHMSA would do. They won't even do anything until after an incident has happened.

**R:** Years ago they were saying, "We got to get this pipeline in the ground". This started in 2018, so this pipe has literally been sitting out for almost six years, if not longer. They were saying "the pipe can't sit out, we have to get it in the ground as fast as possible". And now, years and years later, people are asking "what about the pipe that's been sitting out?" And they're saying, "Oh, it's fine. Don't worry about it".

**TFSR:** So we've talked about some of the local fears of what might come out of this if the pipeline is built. Does anyone have stats or information concerning the wider impact outside of the area where the pipeline is? Like Crystal was talking about what's going on in Cancer Alley...

**C:** There's already people who don't have drinking water in their house right now, because of this pipeline. I don't know if that's an answer. And it's not even built. But I'll let Rose go, and I'll see what they say.

**R:** So outside of what's going to happen locally... We could probably talk for another hour about what's gonna happen if this pipeline is built. This pipeline is equivalent to 26 coal fired power plants, just back to our conversation about the marketing of natural gas and how it seems like it's so much better than coal – these are the carbon emissions that we're talking about. That is huge when we're thinking about Climate Change, and the really serious impacts that we're all already seeing. I imagine anyone listening to this right now can look out their window and be seeing smog from these wildfires. The way this is going to contribute to Climate Change is really serious and needs to be considered and clearly wasn't considered. "Oh, Congress passed this great environmental legislation", but what were they

done everything “the right way”. I heard people say the only thing that’s left is civil disobedience, and I never thought I would hear some of these folks ever say that. Them attaching this to National Debt Ceiling has energized a certain group of people for who locking into equipment wasn’t their first choice. It was definitely doing the lobbying and all that stuff. I think by Biden basically fucking us has definitely re-energized some people. But I’ll let Rose talk more about what they’re hearing.

**R:** I think similarly, a lot of people are just really fired up locally, regionally, but also nationally, through this whole process of MVP being the side deal with Manchin. It also helps, the people that are so pissed at Joe Manchin. Suddenly this pipeline has caught national attention, because the way this has gone down is so fucked up. For some folks, like Crystal was saying, it is really a wake up call to the reality that this system that we have – the courts, the state – are not going to save us from these fossil fuel pipelines or from projects like this. They’re trying to be forced through communities. I think a lot of people are seeing that we’re going to have to stop this ourselves. It’s an important time to be reminding everyone that this is not over, that the courts were not the only way that this pipeline was being stalled for all these years.

**C:** On my end, I’m just trying to make space for everyone to be involved. Water monitoring, worksite training monitoring back in 2018 resulted in the MVP being fined \$2.15 million for over 300 violations. Those were pictures taken and submitted by local people. They still have over the 600 water bodies, which just a couple of weeks ago was only 400 and some water bodies. So that was a lie. And now that they got their permit, it’s “oh, yeah, now it’s over 600”, including the Greenbrier River in West Virginia. I think there’s something special about that – maybe Rose can say. It’s never been messed with or bored under and it’s also pretty huge. But 75% of this route is through moderately higher flood risk areas, which have also have slid, since even before they’re doing construction. This is just in places that they’ve already buried pipe. There’s the real danger of this thing blowing up. People know the damage to their lives. Stopping this pipeline is about saving people’s lives also.

**R:** To your point on the rivers, the Greenbrier is definitely crucial, really amazing, beautiful river. It’s one of the only un-dammed rivers in the country. Their original plan was to dam a lot of these rivers to put the pipeline through. Now they’re going to drill under all the rivers. Again, we’re talking about putting a 42-inch pipeline under a major river. It doesn’t take an ecologist or a biologist or a scientist to think through that and to know that this is just a wildly terrible idea. A lot of the terrain also around here is karst terrain, which makes it in part susceptible to landslides. For folks who don’t know, karst basically means that the ground is filled with caves. And it’s also susceptible to sinkholes. The idea that there’s going to be a pipe in this area that is susceptible to sinkholes just feels so dangerous. If there had been gas running through this pipeline, it would have already exploded, and that feels important to know.

**C:** Let’s talk about the earthquakes that we’ve had here recently. We’ve had a couple

from), or where they’re being burned. In some cases, some of the same companies like Peabody or others, have their fingers in things like liquefied natural gas throughout the transition process. And it’s not so much like ending one process, as you said. There’s still a lot of power plants around the country that burn coal, and it’s coming from somewhere, as much as it is just industries finding new markets and ways to extract that stuff with federal subsidies.

Crystal, I had no idea about the brine solution that was used in some places to halt freezing of roads. I had heard of that happening, but I didn’t know if that was just saltwater from the coast. Or I had heard that in some places, like in the Midwest they still use salts from sugar beets, a byproduct of that. I had no idea. That’s wacky and scary.

**C:** It’s so gross. It’s not in every state. I don’t think it’s legal in Virginia, but Pennsylvania. There’s some states that do have it. I don’t think we’re actually doing it here. But it’s still a thing. Everything runs down this way, into another river. It’s all heading to the Gulf.

**TFSR:** That’s a really good point. There have already been years of struggle in a few different forms that have led to what seemed like an end to the the Mountain Valley Pipeline or MVP project. People have been resisting on site and at corporate headquarters and all over the place. I wonder if you wouldn’t mind talking a little bit about some of the phases of the struggles, and also what pipe was laid by these companies?

**C:** Well, I can say that people have been fighting the pipeline since it was proposed in all the ways through conventional channels, like courts, going to meetings, writing, letters, lobbying, grassroots organizing, and people have been taking direct action since construction began in 2018. Rose, you want to talk a little bit more about that?

**R:** I know, you have interviewed some folks throughout the direct action campaign, especially from Yellow Finch, which I can talk a little bit about and I’m sure Crystal can talk a little bit about as well, but the start of the direct action campaign happened in the so called Jefferson National Forest in the beginning of 2018 on Peters Mountain. This is really important, beloved mountain to this fight. The Appalachian Trail runs across the top of it. It’s of incredible ecological importance, but also just very important to the surrounding community. MVP came for that mountain as one of the first places because they knew that, and folks were in the trees along the Appalachian Trail to stop them.

So, two tree-sits along the Appalachian Trail stopped construction up there for 95 days. They were reinforced with other blockades further down the road, including a monopod blockade and a skypod blockade. Later that year MVP actually lost their permits to go through the Jefferson National Forest. So if it wasn’t for folks helping stop construction in that forest, pipe may have already been laid there. In a little bit, we can talk more about what the landscape of that looks like



now, but until very recently, they still didn't have those permits to go through the National Forest, they had been twice revoked. After 2018, the direct action campaign has continued for over five years and dozens of people have put their bodies on the line to stop the pipeline. There's been some really creative blockades, like a local grandmother, Becky Crabtree, who locked herself in her first ever car, a Ford Pinto, to stop construction at her farm. In summer of 2021, three self-described old folks locked themselves to a car blockade to stop access on an access road.

There have been people who have locked themselves to giant wooden animals that are found in the area. The longest lasting blockade of the campaign was the Yellow Finch tree sits, which were outside of Elliston, Virginia, for two and a half years protecting some of the last remaining trees on the route.

**C:** I just wanted to add, that there's been college professors, raging grannies, there's been young folks. So many people from different walks of life have stepped up and definitely put their body on the line, and had to deal with the courts and all that mess. Yellow Finch tree-sits... If "fuck around and find out" really should be in the dictionary, it'd be about Yellow Finch tree-sits because of them leaving those tree-sits up for 932 days. There was a community built among people that would probably have never talked in everyday life, if it wasn't for this fight against the Mountain Valley Pipeline. That space allowed for a lot of good conversations, a lot of learning about each other, and how much we really do have in common. And I think that's what made this movement so strong and resilient and determined when it comes down to it. If it has shown grit all the way around, it's just really from the Yellow Finch tree-sits. It just taught us all a whole lot about a lot of things in a magnificent, beautiful way. And that is something that can never be taken back. That should be the definition for "fuck around and find out". That's all I'm gonna say about the Yellow Finch.

**R:** I definitely agree. All of these tactics, in conjunction with the legal challenges, have successfully stalled this pipeline for over five years. The original completion date was the end of 2018. Now it's 2023. They say they'd like to finish it by the end of the year. We're going to stop them from finishing it by the end of the year. It is important to acknowledge all the work that has gone in to get us to this point. There is a lot of pipe in the ground right now, but there's a lot of areas left there. We just learned they had 643 water crossings at least. They had always said they were halfway done, but now we know there's probably over 643. There's the national forest that I was talking about and Peters Mountain. There's a lot of really challenging terrain for them to cross still.

**TFSR:** It's okay if you don't have an answer to this: I know that between these and other methods that people had of slowing the process, the companies involved in this have lost millions of potential dollars that they were going to be earning off of this at every step of the way. For these companies, is there no bottom to their pockets? Or are they getting a bunch of federal subsidy or state subsidies to cover the cost of lost potential profits due to the the weight they've had to make to try to build this project out?

income for this community, this region. What folks really do need is some better ideas – other than this.

**TFSR:** It seems comparable to the conversation when local governments are talking about building a new prison. Whatever it can bring, it might create jobs for members of the local community – for construction, but probably a lot of them aren't gonna get as terrible job as a guard or administration at a prison job is. That promise is just dangled there, and it's not even usually fulfilled in that manner. It does kind of bleed over into hotels and other service industry, like you mentioned, but also, there's a lot of other negative consequences besides environmental ones. Man Camps, for example, that are related to the building of extractive facilities oftentimes, create a scenario where there's an uptake in misogynist and sexual violence.

**C:** Well, and just displacing local people, because they bring their RVs here. I've already have a friend who can't find a place to park her RV, which she lives out of (that was her retirement thing for herself). She's staying with her daughter, because all the spaces around here are booked up to pipeliners. So they displace people too, and rent around here is so high right now. I'm sure rent prices are up everywhere, but especially in this area. Any available spaces are also now being taken up by these out-of-towners.

If I could just add on about long-term jobs. I have not read this book yet, but I was in a Zoom meeting with them, it's called Coal, Cages, Crisis. The thing that was part of it – was talking about how in these communities, they are building a lot of jails, as the new economy. They give seniors in high school \$1,000 bonus to join their CEO class or whatever. That's pretty gross. We shouldn't be building more jails and prisons to make the economy a better place. Sustainable real jobs, real investment. We know the money's out there. It's just they don't want to in this area. As always, we're gonna fight this pipeline, we're gonna have to fight for everything for us in this area – and that's jobs, our future, community, all that.

**R:** That's a really important way to highlight the way we see this pipeline, and all fossil fuel extractive industry – tied to all these other issues and movements to be fighting: prisons, extraction, patriarchy, white supremacy, borders, capitalism, all of the bad things. Again, it really is about so much more than a pipeline.

**TFSR:** So assuming the capitalists' hope was that this would catch activists and communities unaware, that they could just restart it and folks wouldn't be able to organize themselves, can you talk a bit about the work of reinvigorating the resistance? This project has been on hold for a couple of years (if the last construction was happening in 2021). What does the process of re-energizing this look like?

**C:** The energy is out there. I'm just speaking from what I've seen. We've had a rally in DC in front of the White House and rode a bus from this area, and we got the news on the bus that they were given their 404 permit. These are people who have



**traction, under settler colonial USA. Not unlike the rest of Turtle Island, or so-called North America, but they've been a source for coal, for timber, and for other raw materials to be removed at great human and natural cost, leaving behind devastation for short-term profit for a few. Can you speak about the Mountain Valley Pipeline in this legacy of devastating the landscape for extraction and the resistance that people put up to it in that manner?**

**R:** I can start on that. So, like you mentioned, there is long history of outsiders coming in and profiting off of Appalachia's resources and leaving a slew of environmental, social and economic devastation in its wake. We've seen this in a variety of ways. The coal fields and areas where Mountain Top Removal [MTR] is active, are really good examples. There are so many issues in those areas that can be traced back to the coal industry: undrinkable water, terrible air quality, high cancer rates, the opioid epidemic and unemployment.

Like I said before, I just want to acknowledge that that is still happening. There's this idea that coal is really on the decline, but new MTR permits are being issued, and mines are expanding. That is definitely an area that feels like a sacrifice zone to a lot of people. There's a long history of this since colonization of the people in Appalachia and land of Appalachia – they are being expendable. You know, like the Battle of Blair Mountain – we're talking about the National Guard dropping bombs on striking workers – the state and industry in collusion with each other. It feels like this area doesn't matter, and the people in this area don't matter. Once again, with this recent Debt Ceiling Deal, we're seeing this with the MVP, Appalachia feels like a sacrifice zone.

This is the thing that the Democrats and the politicians were willing to sacrifice so that they could pass this law. This goes all the way back to last summer, when they passed the Inflation Reduction Act. They, the Dems, cut this side deal with Joe Manchin, who's pet project this seems to be, he also seems to get whatever he wants. They cut this side deal, so that they could pass this supposedly great environmental legislation, and this was what they were willing to sacrifice. They tried to slide it into all other kinds of laws since then. It didn't work because people were fighting back, but the Debt Ceiling Deal with potential economic collapse on the horizon – this is how they finally got it through.

Appalachia is gonna see very few profits from this. Everyone talks about all the jobs that a pipeline is supposed to bring and that just isn't real. We see who comes here to work on this pipeline. Local folks maybe get to work for private security. There are no people here who are getting good jobs from this pipeline. Not that that's the only thing that matters here, but there's just very clear collaboration between the state and these huge corporations to force this hazardous project through an area that doesn't need it, most of which doesn't want it either.

**C:** The local job line is a bunch of bullshit. Look at all these cars – they are out of town trucks. Maybe waitresses are making a little bit of more money now with tips or being busier, but, a friend at the gas station who's now not getting a longer break, because they're busier now, she's still making the same bullshit wages as before. It's not like she's making more money there. This isn't a long, sustainable

**C:** I would love to know, maybe Rose knows. I do want to just point out that this project was a little bit over 3 billion originally, and now they're up to 6 billion.

**R:** I think that a lot of the investors had capped their investments. MVP still really could be in financial trouble, in my opinion, and I don't know about federal subsidies, but I do think they have been in very serious debt from this project for a long time, and the investors had been very unhappy. Personally, I find a little bit of hope in that.

**TFSR: I had been under the impression before this conversation that the project had actually been canceled. I was slightly mixing it up with the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, the ACP, because they were both planned to be built in the same general region. There was a lot of resistance going around to both the projects at the same time, even though they covered different terrains. Do a lot of people work off of that same presumption that the MVP was canceled? Is that a conversation that you've been having a lot recently?**

**C:** I have had people in my community talk, that they had thought that it had gotten canceled. So yes, and even with some of the court rulings, it's all very confusing. I'm a single mom and I work a regular job during the week. To keep up with all this mess... The only reason I'm able to do that is because I've found myself in a space with others. At the Yellow Finch tree-sits, I've gotten to meet other people who can look into these things better, direct me to where I need to be paying attention. But not everybody has that, because you just hear what's on the local news or whatever. There's been a lot of misconceptions that this pipeline was canceled – and it really should be. It was attached to that National Debt Ceiling. I don't know if we're going to talk about that, but it's important to know that this company had court hearings, they had lost permits, and after it was signed to that Debt Ceiling, they have no judicial role now. We don't even know if we get violations, which we will, because that's what happened in 2018, when they were actively working. We're not even sure, if they can even get in trouble for it. They have free range right now, to do whatever they want to do. And that's scary and should be alarming for anybody.

**R:** This is important to mention. Before Congress essentially bailed out this pipeline project, they were in serious financial trouble, we've mentioned – billions of dollars in debt. They were still tied up in court, earlier this year, they lost an important permit to cross state waterways in West Virginia, which impacted their federal permit to cross all waterways. It was unclear whether they would be able to finish this pipeline by the end of this year or at all. So in a lot of ways, it felt like the fight was really being won. A lot of people assumed they never were going to build it based on how that direction was going. There also hasn't been any construction since the fall of 2021. Locally, people are looking at the project and seeing that, and thinking that probably it's over. So it is an important conversation to be having and to make the distinction, more regionally and nationally with the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, which was canceled, and far less of that pipe is in the ground. It's definitely a separate set of circumstances. We were just on hold here, thinking that it was

likely that it might not go based on how badly things were going for MVP.

**C:** I definitely didn't think they would be working this summer, because it would have taken that long for them to get that permit back from West Virginia, to rewrite all that stuff. I definitely wasn't expecting this at all.

**TFSR:** Because it's part of that package that's been signed, it supersedes all the local challenges that the executive has (which the EPA falls under) at a federal level. They have decided not to pursue blocking it anymore due to the Debt Ceiling agreement? Is that an OK way of looking at it?

**R:** Just to be really clear about what this new law says, the one that was slid into the Debt Ceiling Deal... This new law mandated that they get all of their permits back within 21 days of the law being passed, which they did just a few days ago. I don't know that there was any recourse for the other agencies involved. It was just like – “the law is there, now you got your permits”. Crystal was mentioning this earlier – a really scary thing about the law is that now there's no legal challenges. These ways that have been really successful and slowing the pipeline in conjunction with protests at headquarters, people doing direct action on the ground... This important channel for challenging, slowing and stopping the pipeline has been taken away. The new law says that you can't challenge permits or the pipeline at all. You can only challenge this law in a specific court. So you'd have to challenge the law as a whole. It's the way to legalize environmental violations and throw all regulation as far as these things go to the wind.

A lot of us are not surprised that this has happened. It is just a very extreme way to show the power that the fossil fuel industry has and how the state will essentially do anything to save them when they're floundering. This was a failing project. I can't really imagine another way they could have been saved other than this. It's clear that the state, and the fossil fuel industry are together in that way. This is a really classic example and a very extreme one.

**TFSR:** Besides the pushing this through that federal agreement, the landscape has changed in terms of the repercussions for people engaging in actions concerning what's considered to be vital infrastructure. Not only since the resistance at Standing Rock, but also MVP, ACP, low LFE [26.46] and other anti-pipeline struggles. Also since the George Floyd uprising, a number of states have passed new laws, threatening extra or advanced charges against people that are doing civil disobedience or direct action that relates to what's considered public infrastructure projects, despite whether those are activities that would harm people or not.

I wonder if you have anything to say about that? Or if that's the thing that seems like it would affect this and the legal needs for support infrastructure for folks that are going to be trying to stop the MVP from spreading?

**R:** I can certainly talk a little bit about repression that has happened in the past,

and maybe whether or not that's a sign of what will happen in the future. We've been fighting this pipeline through direct action for over five years, and folks have definitely caught some very serious charges. People have had felonies, people have had threats of terrorism charges. A felony has never stuck in the campaign, all of those felonies have been thrown out. But the state has definitely tried to throw all kinds of bullshit at people. It's really impressive that people have continued to fight in the face of that repression and had some real consequences. The final Yellow Finch tree-sitters that were extracted from those tree-sits – each spent months in jail. There was a really vibrant community that wrote letters and showed their support. We hope to not see that kind of state repression in the future, but we know that it is certainly possible just based on what they've done in the past. There could certainly be a time of need for support.

**C:** I'll just say that about threats of terrorism act: I stayed up in a tree for three days at Yellow Finch myself, and one of the main reasons I did that was because it really pissed me off that they were going to try to charge two folks with threat of terrorism. I'm a grandmother, I clean houses locally. That was in solidarity. Okay, then arrest me too with a terrorist charge. What they're doing is not terrorist. We had a local insurrectionist from the January 6 event, who was out on bond the next morning, and the two that got arrested for the tree sits, I'm pretty sure they they did not get a bond and got extra time that took off from their good time.

So, when we're talking about repression, it's always a certain group that is getting that. More of us have to be brave and staying in solidarity, now more than ever and trust that the people are going to have our backs also. We're talking about being scared. Well, myself personally – I'm being scared of what charges they may throw coming forward. I deal with that myself. How can I make sure that I'm being supportive in all the ways, not just a grandmother, but as a local community person who is now gonna have to start going to the supervisory board meetings here locally, to make sure that folks within a mile of this pipeline know the evacuation route. Where is that? Who do they call when they see things going bad? There's not even an odorant in this pipeline, so they wouldn't even know if it's leaking. We live next to train tracks and interstate and if it is leaking, anything can spark that, and this is going to be a catastrophe. They have so many landslides already on, by looking that information up on their FERC [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission] docket. I think protecting people can be scary, but it's just the humane thing to do.

**R:** I just want to acknowledge this, since we're having conversation about repression, that a lot of folks over the years have put their bodies on the line in the path of this pipeline and risk arrest. We know that risking arrest in that way does require a certain degree of privilege for many folks. This is why it's so important to us, as people that don't think pipelines should exist, but also don't think that prisons should exist – to engage in prisoner support work, jail solidarity work and abolitionist work. I just want to just throw that in as we're having this conversation. Crystal and I are both engaged with some of that work.

**TFSR:** Southern and central Appalachia have historically been zones of ex-